

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 SAJ-01 PM-04

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FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L LENINGRAD 0077

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJ: UNOFFICIAL ART EXHIBITION IN LENINGRAD

REF: (A) MOSCOW 0527 (B) LENINGRAD 043

1. SUMMARY. KGB DECISION TO LET UNOFFICIAL ART EXHIBITION OPEN
HERE JAN 18 IN APARTMENT PHYSICIST KAZARINOV REPRESENTS
OPENING SUCCESS FOR MOSCOW/LENINGRAD DISSIDENT ARTISTS BUT
WE DOUBT THAT LOCAL AUTHORITIES WILL LET THIS ACT OF DEFIANCE
PASS WITHOUT VIGOROUS COUNTERACTION. END SUMMARY.

2. LENINGRAD AUTHORITIES' DECISION TO PERMIT EXHIBITION BE
HELD PUBLICLY WAS PROBABLY RESULT OF WIDESPREAD PUBLICITY WHICH
MOSCOW/LENINGRAD ORGANIZERS WERE ABLE OBTAIN IN INTERNATIONAL
PRESS AND THEIR SUCCESS IN GETTING OUT PERSONAL INVITATIONS
TO OPENING TO NUMBER OF WESTERN DIPLOMATS AND TO UPI CORRE-
SPONDENT HERE. AUTHORITIES' DECISION MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN
BASED ON FACT THAT EXHIBITION, WHICH SCHEDULED TO LAST UNTIL
SUNDAY JANUARY 22, IS TAKING PLACE IN OUT-OF-WAY NORTHERN
UDEL'NAYA SECTION OF CITY (DRESDENSKAYA 28, APT 16) RATHER
THAN IN CENTER DOWNTOWN LOCATION.

3. DESPITE APPARENT FLEXIBILITY, AUTHORITIES ARE USING AMPLE
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MEANS TO SIGNAL THEIR EXTREME DISPLEASURE AT THIS LATEST ACT
OF DEFIANCE. IN ADDITION TO PREVENTING MOSCOW CONTINGENT
FROM TAKING ANY ACTIVE PART IN EXHIBITION, THEY HAVE TWICE
DETAINED LENINGRAD DISSIDENT ARTIST VLADIMIR OVCHINNIKOV
WHO WAS AMONG PRINCIPAL ORGANIZERS. OVCHINNIKOV WAS RETAINED
AND INTERROGATED FOR FOUR HOURS EVENING OF JANUARY 17
AND, ON JANUARY 18, WAS STOPPED AND LED AWAY BY POLICE AS

HE APPROACHED KAZARINOV APARTMENT HALF HOUR BEFORE OPENING OF EXHIBITION. BEFORE OPENING, AUTHORITIES ALSO STATIONED VERY HEAVY CONTINGENT OF UNIFORMED AND PLAINCLOTHESMEN AT PRINCIPAL STREET ENTRANCES, IN FRONT OF APARTMENT BUILDING, AND IN STAIR-WELLS, AND WERE CHECKING IDENTIFICATION CARDS OF AT LEAST SOME OF RUSSIANS ENTERING BUILDING. WE WERE TOLD THAT MILITIA ALSO CONFISCATED NUMBER OF LATE-ARRIVING PAINTINGS ALTHOUGH 70 WORKS BY 30 ARTISTS ALREADY ON HAND IN APARTMENT WERE NOT DISTURBED.

4. CONOFFS ARRIVING FEW MINUTES AFTER SCHEDULED 4 O'CLOCK OPENING NOTED ABOUT 8-10 PERSONS IN APARTMENT, WHICH EXPANDED TO ABOUT 15 BY TIME CONOFFS DEPARTED HALF HOUR LATER. UPI CORRESPONDENT SVEILIS WAS AMONG THOSE PRESENT. EXHIBITION CONTAINS WORKS BY MOST OF PRINCIPAL ORGANIZERS, INCLUDING OVCHINNIKOV, OSCAR RABIN, KIBLITSKIY, EL'SKAYA AND ZHARKIKH. SOME WORKS MAKE OBVIOUS NEGATIVE POLITICAL STATEMENTS AND OTHERS HAVE CLEAR RELIGIOUS CONTENT. VARIETY OF JCKOWM D-UPON ART STYLES IS ALSO PRESENT.

5. ONE OF PARTICIPANTS TOLD CONGENOFF THAT LOCAL FACTORY WORKERS ARE BEING TOLD THAT DISSIDENT ARTISTS' ACTIONS ARE LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR CERTAIN FOOD SHORTAGES, ESPECIALLY OF LEMONS, ORANGES AND THE LIKE WHICH ARE IN GREAT DEMAND THIS TIME OF YEAR. ARGUMENT GOES THAT BY THEIR ACTIONS DISSIDENTS ARE CREATING FALSE IMAGE OF SOVIET UNION WHICH RESULTS IN DISCRIMINATORY TRADE MEASURES BY WEST, THUS COMPLICATING SOVIET AUTHORITIES' EFFORTS TO ENSURE SUPPLIES FOOD AND OTHER CONSUMER ITEMS FROM ABROAD.

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6. COMMENT: WHILE DISSIDENTS MAY HAVE WON OPENING ROUND, WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF LENINGRAD AUTHORITIES REACT WITH VIGOR IN COMING WEEKS TO THIS LATEST ACT OF DEFIANCE, ESPECIALLY GIVEN ROMANOV'S PREDILECTION FOR TOUGH ACTION. CULTURAL AUTHORITIES HERE HAVE ALREADY MADE IT ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT THEY WOULD NOT TOLERATE PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIVE DEMONSTRATIONS, AND LATEST EXHIBITION MUST SURELY QUALIFY AS FALLING IN THIS CATEGORY IN THEIR EYES BECAUSE OF WIDESPREAD PUBLICITY WHICH IT HAS ENGENDERED. EXHIBITION IS ALSO CERTAIN TO BE SEEN AS FURTHER ESCALATION OF CHALLENGE OFFERED BY OPEN LETTER TO ARTISTS (REFTELS) CRITICIZING PASSIVITY OF UNOFFICIALS AS WELL AS CURRENT GOVERNMENT CARROT AND STICK POLICY AND AT LEAST TACITLY CALLING FOR RESISTANCE TO OFFICIAL EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE (AND THUS "CO-OPT") NON-OFFICIAL ARTISTS.

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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